

Saturday
April 5, 2025

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY:
MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

MONDAY:
ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

TUESDAY:
JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

WEDNESDAY:
EDDIE KROON
SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm

MAILLEYN ALVARADO
VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm

KARAOKE 9:00 - 11:00pm

THURSDAY:
MARRYBELL MADURO
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

FRIDAY:
RICKY THOMAS
GUITARIST
7:00 - 9:00pm

SATURDAY:
EDDIE KROON
SINGER
4:00 - 6:00pm

ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

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The U.S. must return a Maryland man mistakenly deported to an El Salvador prison, a judge says

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and BEN FINLEY

Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. (AP) — A federal judge on Friday ordered the Trump administration to arrange for the return of a Maryland man to the United States after he was mistakenly deported to a notorious El Salvador prison, while a U.S. government attorney was at a loss to explain what happened.

The ruling rejected the White House's claim that it lacks the power to retrieve Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran national, because he is no longer in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has corrected deportation errors in previous years, according to Abrego Garcia's attorney and legal experts. The government filed an appeal immediately after the decision, while Trump administration officials repeated assertions that Abrego Garcia is a dangerous gang member and that U.S. courts have no control over the matter.

"We are unaware of the judge having jurisdiction or authority over the country of El Salvador," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement following the ruling by U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis.

ICE expelled the 29-year-old Abrego Garcia last month despite an immigration judge's 2019 ruling that shielded him from deportation to El Salvador, where he faced likely persecution by local gangs.

His mistaken deportation, described by the White House as an "administrative



Jennifer Vasquez Sura, the wife of Kilmar Abrego Garcia of Maryland, who was mistakenly deported to El Salvador, speaks during a news conference at CASA's Multicultural Center in Hyattsville, Md., Friday, April 4, 2025.

Associated Press

error," has outraged many and raised concerns about expelling noncitizens who were granted permission to be in the U.S.

"The record reflects that Abrego Garcia was apprehended in Maryland without legal basis ... and without further process or legal justification was removed to El Salvador," Xinis wrote in her order.

Reuveni conceded to Xinis that Abrego Garcia should not have been removed from the U.S. and shouldn't have been sent to El Salvador. He couldn't tell the judge upon what authority he was arrested in Maryland. "I'm also frustrated that I have no answers for you for a lot of these questions," he said. The judge also questioned why Abrego Garcia was sent

to the prison in El Salvador, which observers say is rife with human rights abuses. "Why is he there, of all places?" asked Xinis, who was nominated by President Barack Obama.

"I don't know," Reuveni replied. "That information has not been given to me." Reuveni had asked the judge for more time — 24 hours — for the government to possibly broker Abrego Garcia's return.

Abrego Garcia's attorney, Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg, told the judge he was dismayed that the government had done nothing to get his client back, even after admitting its errors.

"Plenty of tweets. Plenty of White House press conferences. But no actual steps taken with the government

of El Salvador to make it right," he said.

Sandoval-Moshenberg said the government's response to its error was essentially to say, "We've tried nothing, and we're all out of options." "This is not something that's outside of the government's power," he said, noting that the U.S. routinely extradites gang leaders, drug traffickers and other imprisoned people from other countries.

In legal briefs, Sandoval-Moshenberg asked the court to remove Abrego Garcia from the "torture prison" and "return him to the custody of the United States."

The White House has cast Abrego Garcia as an MS-13 gang member and doubled down on that claim after Friday's hearing. Tricia McLaughlin, Department of

Homeland Security assistant secretary, stated that the U.S. has "intelligence reports that he is involved in human trafficking."

McLaughlin did not comment on whether the administration would comply with the judge's order or when and where Abrego Garcia might be returned to the U.S. But she said that he would be "locked up and off America's streets."

"MS-13 gang members murder, rape, and maim for sport," she said. "It's shameful that the mainstream media chooses to do the bidding of these vicious gangs while ignoring their victims."

Abrego Garcia's attorneys have countered that there is no evidence he was in MS-13. The allegation is based on a confidential informant's claim in 2019 that Abrego Garcia was a member of a chapter in New York, where he has never lived.

Abrego Garcia had a permit from DHS to legally work in the U.S., his attorney said. He served as a sheet metal apprentice and was pursuing his journeyman license.

He fled El Salvador around 2011 because he and his family were facing threats by local gangs. In 2019, a U.S. immigration judge granted him protection from deportation to El Salvador. He was released and ICE did not appeal the decision or try to deport him to another country.

Abrego Garcia later married Jennifer Vasquez Sura, a U.S. citizen. The couple are parents to their son and her two children from a previous relationship. □

China hit brakes on TikTok deal after Trump announced wide-ranging tariffs, AP source says

By FATIMA HUSSEIN, AAMER MADHANI and SARAH PARVINI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday said he is signing an executive order to keep TikTok running in the U.S. for another 75 days to give his administration more time to broker a deal to bring the social media platform under American ownership.

The order was announced as White House officials believed they were nearing a deal for the app's operations to be spun off into a new company based in the U.S. and owned and operated by a majority of American investors, with China's ByteDance maintaining a minority position, according to a person familiar with the matter. But Beijing hit the brakes on a deal Thursday after Trump announced wide-ranging tariffs around the globe, including against China. ByteDance representatives called the White House to indicate that China would no longer approve the deal until there could be negotiations about trade and tariffs, said the person, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive details of the negotiations.

Congress had mandated that the platform be divested from China by Jan. 19 or barred in the U.S. on national security grounds, but Trump moved unilaterally to extend the deadline to this weekend, as he sought to negotiate an agreement to keep it running. Trump has recently entertained an array of offers from U.S. businesses seeking to buy a share of the popular social media site.

But on Friday it became uncertain whether a tentative deal could be announced after the Chinese government's reversal of its position complicated TikTok's ability to send clear signals about the nature of the agreement that had been reached for fear of upsetting its negotiations with Chinese regulators.

The near-deal was constructed over the course of

months, with Vice President JD Vance's team negotiating directly with several potential investors and officials from ByteDance. The plan called for a 120-day closing period to finalize the paperwork and financing. The deal also had the approval of existing investors, new investors, ByteDance and the administration.

The Trump administration had confidence that China would approve the proposed deal until the tariffs went into effect. Trump indicated Friday that he can still get a deal done during the 75-day extension.

"My Administration has been working very hard on a Deal to SAVE TIKTOK, and we have made tremendous progress," Trump posted on his social media platform. "The Deal requires more work to ensure all necessary approvals are signed, which is why I am signing an Executive Order to keep TikTok up and running for an additional 75 days."

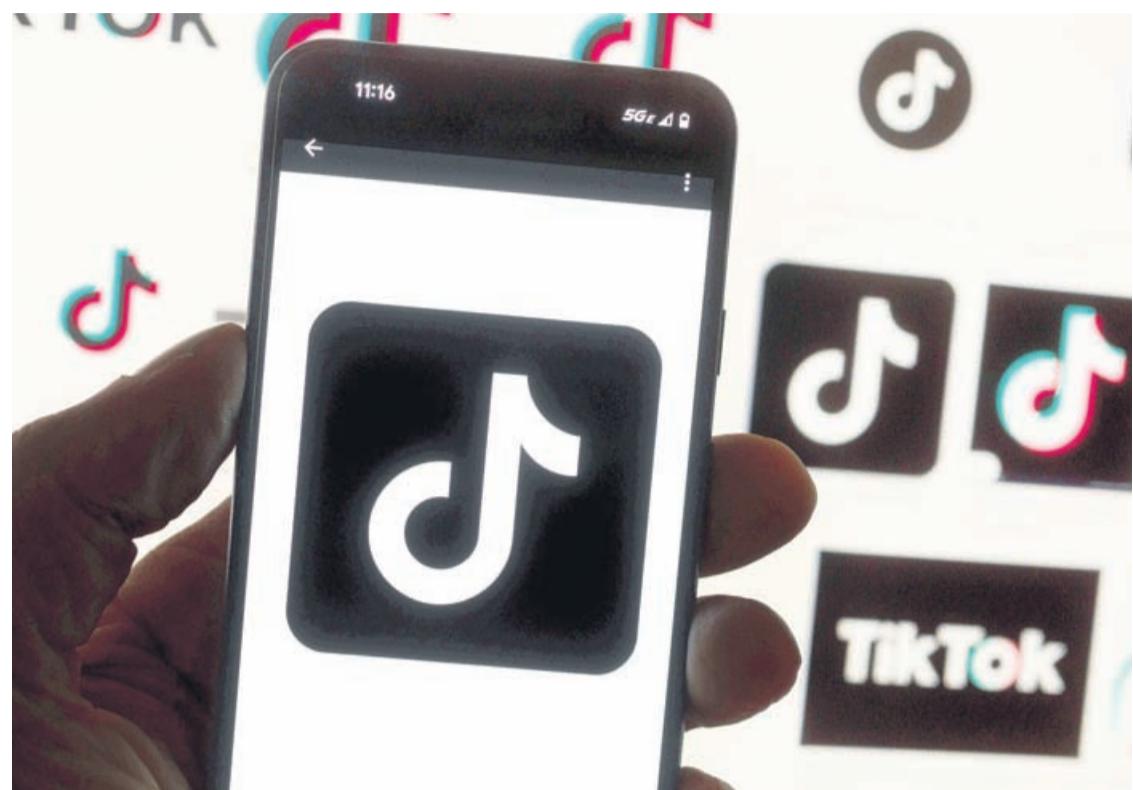
Trump added, "We look forward to working with TikTok and China to close the Deal."

A spokesperson for ByteDance confirmed in a statement that the company has been discussing a "potential solution" with the U.S. government but noted that an "agreement has not been executed."

"There are key matters to be resolved," the spokesperson said. "Any agreement will be subject to approval under Chinese law."

TikTok, which has headquarters in Singapore and Los Angeles, has said it prioritizes user safety, and China's Foreign Ministry has said China's government has never and will not ask companies to "collect or provide data, information or intelligence" held in foreign countries.

Trump's extension marks the second time that he has temporarily blocked the 2024 law that banned the popular social video app after the deadline passed for ByteDance to divest. That law was passed with bipartisan support in Congress and upheld unanimously by the Supreme Court, which said



The TikTok logo is seen on a mobile phone in front of a computer screen which displays the TikTok home screen, Oct. 14, 2022, in Boston.

Associated Press

the ban was necessary for national security.

Although the decision to keep TikTok alive through an executive order has received some scrutiny, it has not faced a legal challenge in court. That type of push-back is unlikely, legal experts say, due in part to how difficult it is for someone to establish the legal right, or standing, to sue. A plaintiff would have to be able to show harm from the delay in enforcing the law.

Sarah Kreps, director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute, said she doesn't believe anyone has that standing. "It would be different if this platform weren't already in place," she said.

"But if you're trying to just continue with the status quo, it's different."

Still, if the extension keeps control of TikTok's algorithm under ByteDance's authority, the national security concerns that led to the ban persist.

Chris Pierson, CEO of the cybersecurity and privacy protection platform Black-Cloak, said that if the algorithm is still controlled by ByteDance, then it is still "controlled by a company that is in a foreign, adversarial nation-state that actually could use that data for other means."

The main reason for all this is

the control of data and the control of the algorithm," said Pierson, who served on the Department of Homeland Security's Privacy Committee and Cybersecurity Subcommittee for more than a decade. "If neither of those two things change, then it has not changed the underlying purpose, and it has not changed the underlying risks that are presented."

The law allows for one 90-day reprieve, but only if there's a deal on the table and a formal notification to Congress. Trump's actions so far violate the law, said Alan Rozenshtain, an associate law professor at the University of Minnesota.

Rozenshtain pushed back on Trump's claim that delaying the ban is an "extension." "He's not extending anything. This continues to simply be a unilateral non enforcement declaration," he said. "All he's doing is saying that he will not enforce the law for 75 more days. The law is still in effect. The companies are still violating it by providing services to TikTok. The extension comes at a time when Americans are even more closely divided on what to do about TikTok than they were two years ago."

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that

about one-third of Americans said they supported a TikTok ban, down from 50% in March 2023. Roughly one-third said they would oppose a ban, and a similar percentage said they weren't sure.

Among those who said they supported banning the social media platform, about 8 in 10 cited concerns over users' data security being at risk as a major factor in their decision, according to the report.

Terrell Wade, a content creator with 1.5 million followers on TikTok under the handle @TheWadeEmpire, has been trying to grow his presence on other platforms since January.

"I'm glad there's an extension, but to be honest, going through this process again feels a bit exhausting," he said. "Every time a new deadline pops up, it starts to feel less like a real threat and more like background noise. That doesn't mean I'm ignoring it, but it's hard to keep reacting with the same urgency each time." He is keeping up his profile on Instagram, YouTube and Facebook in addition to TikTok. "I just hope we get more clarity soon so creators like me and consumers can focus on other things rather than the 'what ifs,'" he said. □

L.A. County reaches \$4 billion agreement to settle sexual abuse claims at juvenile facilities

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD and AMY TAXIN
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County has reached a \$4 billion agreement to settle nearly 7,000 claims of sexual abuse in juvenile facilities since 1959, officials said Friday.

The agreement, which still needs approval from the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, far surpasses a \$2.6 billion settlement reached in 2022 with Boy Scouts of America that was the largest aggregate sexual abuse settlement in U.S. history at the time.

"On behalf of the County, I apologize wholeheartedly to everyone who was harmed by these reprehensible acts," Fesia Davenport, the county's chief executive, said in a statement.

The agreement would settle lawsuits filed by thousands of people who alleged they were mistreated and sexually abused in foster care and juvenile detention facilities in Los Angeles County. The plaintiffs were able to sue because of a California law that took effect in 2020 and suspended the statute of limitations for childhood sex abuse victims to bring cases for three years.

Many of the claims involved



Jonathan Wright, 39, holds up the T-shirt he was given when he first went to MacLaren Children's Center in El Monte as an 8-year-old during a news conference in Los Angeles, June 9, 2022.

Associated Press

the MacLaren Children's Center, which was closed in 2003. The facility, which was intended to be a safe space for children awaiting placement in foster homes, opened in 1961 and was overseen by probation officials until it was placed under the county's Department of Children and Family Services in 1976.

One man said he was sexually abused by a physician at the facility when he was 8 years old, while another said

he was assaulted by a male staff member in a bathroom when he was 5. Children were routinely placed in solitary confinement, drugged and restrained in chairs at the facility, according to court papers filed by plaintiffs.

"It is bittersweet for the survivors, because nothing is ever going to take away what was done to them, and how badly their lives were altered and how much they have suffered,"

said Adam Slater, one of the plaintiffs' attorneys. "However, the settlement hopefully gives them some measure of justice and provides them with some measure of closure."

Other private and public entities have been rocked by allegations of wide-ranging abuse and subsequent settlements.

The 2022 settlement by Boy Scouts of America, which recently renamed itself Scouting America, involved

more than 80,000 men who said they were molested as children by scouting leaders and others.

And last year the Archdiocese of Los Angeles agreed to pay \$800 million to victims of clergy sexual abuse, bringing the total payout to more than \$1.5 billion.

Disclosure of the massive tentative payout by Los Angeles County comes at a time when the nation's largest county — home to about 10 million residents — is facing a tightening bind of financial obligations on its \$49 billion annual budget. Officials fear hundreds of millions of dollars for public services could vanish in Trump administration cutbacks, while the county has seen additional costs from January's historic wildfires as it also deals with an ongoing homeless crisis.

Davenport recently said the county is facing a "large amount of uncertainty" with its budget — some agencies are largely funded by federal dollars.

The proposed agreement includes creating a county-wide hotline for reporting child sexual abuse allegations against employees and developing a system to expedite investigations, officials said. □

2 U.S. Border Patrol officers are charged with taking bribes to wave in people without documents



Vehicles wait in line to cross the border into the United States at the San Ysidro Port of Entry, Tuesday, March 18, 2025, in Tijuana, Mexico.

Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Two U.S. border inspectors in Southern California have been charged with taking thousands of dollars in bribes to

allow people to enter the country through the nation's busiest port of entry without showing documents, prosecutors said. U.S. Customs and

Border Protection officers Farlis Almonte and Ricardo Rodriguez were assigned to immigration inspection booths at the San Ysidro Port of Entry. They were charged after investigators found phone evidence showing they had exchanged messages with human traffickers in Mexico and discovered unexplained cash deposits into their bank accounts, according to a criminal complaint unsealed Thursday. Surveillance video showed at least one instance in which a vehicle with a driver and a passenger stopped at a checkpoint but only the driver was documented as having entered the country, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said the officers waved dozens of vehicles carrying people without documents. They said both men were paid thousands for each vehicle they waved through.

It wasn't immediately known if Almonte has an attorney who can speak on his behalf. The National Border Patrol Council, the union representing Border Patrol officers, didn't immediately return an email seeking comment.

Rodriguez's attorney, Michael Hawkins, said the case was still in the "infant stages" and that Rodriguez has the presumption of innocence. "We look forward to working through the current situation," Hawkins said in an

email in which he described Rodriguez as hardworking and loyal.

The investigation on Almonte and Rodriguez started after three migrant smugglers who were arrested last year told federal investigators they had been working with U.S. border inspectors, federal prosecutors said.

While Almonte was in custody, investigators allegedly seized nearly \$70,000 in cash they believe his romantic partner was trying to move to Tijuana. Prosecutors wrote in a court filing that Almonte is potentially facing additional charges for money laundering and obstruction of justice. The San Diego Union Tribune reported. □

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Europe and Canada say they'll spend more on defense, but are cool on U.S. demands

By LORNE COOK and MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European NATO allies and Canada on Friday said they are willing to ramp up defense spending but are cool on American demands for the size of their military budgets, particularly given U.S. President Donald Trump's readiness to draw closer to Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

U.S. allies have spent billions of dollars more on defense since Putin ordered a full-scale invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago, but almost a third of them still don't meet NATO's target of at least 2% of their gross domestic product. Trump has said that U.S. allies should commit to spending at least 5%, but that would require investment at an unprecedented scale. According to NATO figures, the U.S. was projected to have spent 3.38% last year, the only ally whose spending has



European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, third left, attends a meeting of the North Atlantic Council in foreign ministers format at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Friday, April 4, 2025.

Associated Press

dropped over the last decade.

"It is important that we all agree that Russia is a threat. If not, I don't know why we should always increase more and more defense spending," Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly told reporters at NATO headquarters in Brussels. NATO leaders said at a summit last year that Russia "remains the most significant and direct threat to

Allies' security."

Trump's public rehabilitation of Putin, who had become an international pariah indicted for war crimes, has disturbed U.S. allies, and they believe that the decision to rule out NATO membership for Ukraine weakened Kyiv's hand at the negotiating table before peace talks have even begun.

Beyond that, Europe and Canada were alarmed last

month when the United States split with European allies by refusing to blame Russia for its invasion of Ukraine in votes on three U.N. resolutions seeking an end to the war.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that Washington isn't insisting that its allies hit the 5% spending target overnight, but "we think that's what NATO allies need to be spending for NATO to face the threats that itself has identified and articulated."

Rubio said that the extra spending is required to beef up military capabilities.

"We are as involved in NATO today as we have ever been, and we intend to continue to be. But it has to be a real alliance. And that means that our alliance partners have to increase their own capabilities," he said.

Asked whether that the U.S. would also match the 5% target, Rubio said: "Sure. We're heading there now."

France has set itself an "objective of 3%-3.5%, and we are preparing to reach 3%-3.5%, which is about the level of American defense spending," French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said. France was estimated to be spending 2.06% last year. He said that new funds should be spent on European rather than American equipment. In recent years, European allies placed around two-thirds of their equipment orders with U.S. defense companies. Even as the Trump administration demands that defense spending be ramped up, the president's tariff war is roiling stock markets and is likely to damage economic growth around the world, including among U.S. allies at NATO. Article 2 of NATO's founding treaty states that allies "will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them." □

Thousands rally against Russian Wagner mercenaries in Central African Republic

By JEAN-FERNAND KOENA
Associated Press

BANGUI, Central African Republic (AP) — Thousands took to the streets Friday in the Central African Republic to protest President Faustin Archange Touadera's plans to run for a third term with the backing of Russian-led mercenaries from the Wagner group.

The rally was organized by opposition parties that object to Touadera's third term as president.

The country is one of the first in which the Wagner mercenaries established op-

erations with the pledge of fighting rebel groups and restoring peace. Wagner forces have served as personal bodyguards for Touadera, helping him win a constitutional referendum in July 2023 that could extend his power indefinitely.

"We're here to say no to a third term for Faustin Archange Touadera. But more than that, we want to protect our sovereignty, which Touadera and the Wagner have trampled upon," said a member of the opposition, Justin Winè.

"The Wagner have raped and killed without any justice. This is not normal. To put an end to their reign, Touadera must go," he said. The CAR has been in conflict since 2013, when predominantly Muslim rebels seized power and forced then-President François Bozizé from office. Six of the 14 armed groups that signed a 2019 peace deal later left the agreement. Locals and the government have credited Wagner forces with preventing rebels from taking control of Bangui in 2021.



Central African Republic opposition parties demonstrate in the streets of Bangui Friday, April 4, 2025, to protest the government and its use of Wagner mercenaries.

Associated Press

tending Friday's rally in their thousands to stand up for the country's constitution. □

Danish leader tells the U.S. 'you cannot annex another country' as she visits Greenland

NUUK, Greenland (AP) —

Denmark's prime minister has told the U.S. during a visit to Greenland that "you cannot annex another country," even with the argument that international security is at stake.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, meanwhile, said on Friday that Washington will respect Greenland's self-determination and Copenhagen "should focus on the fact that the Greenlanders don't want to be a part of Denmark."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen was wrapping up a three-day visit to the strategically critical Arctic island on Friday as U.S. President Donald Trump seeks control of Greenland. He argues that Greenland, a semiautonomous territory belonging to the Kingdom of Denmark, is critical to U.S. security.

A week ago, Vice President JD Vance visited a remote U.S. military base in Greenland and accused Denmark of underinvesting in the territory.

Frederiksen pushed back against the U.S. criticism as she spoke on Thursday alongside Greenland's incoming and outgoing leaders on board a Danish naval ship. She argued that Denmark, a NATO ally, has



Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen visits Greenland Business, Greenland's largest business organization, together with Greenland's new Prime Minister, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, during a three-day visit in Nuuk, Greenland, Wednesday, April 2, 2025.

Associated Press

been a reliable friend.

Speaking in English, she said that "if we let ourselves be divided as allies, then we do our foes a favor. And I will do everything that I can to prevent that from happening."

"When you ask our businesses to invest in the U.S., they do. When you ask us to spend more on our defense, we do; and when you ask of us to strengthen security in the Arctic, we are on the same page," she

said.

"But when you demand to take over a part of the Kingdom of Denmark's territory, when we are met by pressure and by threats from our closest ally, what are we to believe in about the country that we have admired for so many years?"

"This is about the world order that we have built together across the Atlantic over generations: you cannot annex another country, not even with an argument

about international security," Frederiksen said.

The Danish leader said that, if the U.S. wants to strengthen security in the Arctic, "let us do so together."

Political parties in Greenland, which has been leaning toward eventual independence from Denmark for years, last week agreed to form a broad-based new coalition government in the face of Trump's designs on the territory. Those have angered many in

Greenland and Denmark. In an interview with Newsmax on Thursday, Vance repeated the accusation that Denmark has "really underinvested in the infrastructure and security of Greenland."

He said Trump's point is that "this matters to our security, this matters to our missile defense, and we're going to protect America's interests come hell or high water."

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who was attending a meeting in Brussels with his NATO counterparts, wrote on social network X that he had an "honest and direct" meeting Thursday with Rubio.

"I made it crystal clear that claims and statements about annexing Greenland are not only unacceptable and disrespectful," Løkke Rasmussen wrote. "They amount to a violation of international law."

Rubio told reporters in Brussels Friday that "no one's annexed anything." He added that Vance has made clear that "he's going to respect the self-determination of Greenlanders."

"Denmark should focus on the fact that the Greenlanders don't want to be a part of Denmark," Rubio said. □



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán speaks during a press statement at the Carmelite Monastery in the Buda Castle in Budapest, Hungary, Thursday, April 3, 2025.

Associated Press

**By JUSTIN SPIKE
Associated Press**

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary was never fully committed to the International Criminal Court, Prime

Minister Viktor Orbán said on Friday, a day after his government announced a decision to quit the global tribunal for war crimes and genocide.

Orbán says Hungary is quitting the ICC to end its 'half-hearted' membership

Speaking on state radio, Orbán offered justification for why Hungary did not detain Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday when Israel's prime minister arrived in Budapest for a state visit despite an ICC arrest warrant.

"Hungary has always been half-hearted" in its ICC membership, said Orbán, who on Thursday said the ICC was "no longer an impartial court, not a court of law, but a political court." Hungary joined the ICC during Orbán's first term as prime minister in 2001.

"We signed an international treaty, but we never took

all the steps that would otherwise have made it enforceable in Hungary," Orbán said, referring to the fact that Hungary's parliament never promulgated the court's statute into Hungarian law.

The court, based in The Hague, Netherlands, issued a warrant for Netanyahu's arrest in November on suspicion of crimes against humanity for his conduct of Israel's war in the Gaza Strip. Signatories to the ICC, such as Hungary, are required to arrest any suspects facing a warrant if they set foot on their soil.

The ICC and other inter-

national organizations have criticized Hungary's defiance of the warrant against Netanyahu. Days before the Israeli leader received a red carpet welcome with full military honors in Hungary's capital, the president of the court's oversight body wrote to the government in Hungary reminding it of its "specific obligation to comply with requests from the court for arrest and surrender."

Judges at the ICC have in the past dismissed similar arguments that failure to promulgate the court's statute exempts countries from complying with its rulings. □



Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!

(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio

Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and

land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times in the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of geological



history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed. This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete ac-

tion in protecting and preserving our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! □

Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill



(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the

Arikok National Park. The staircase that runs on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □

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Surf's Up: Favorite places to catch waves in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Whether you are a salt-seasoned surfer looking for a thrill, or just looking to wet your toes in a little ocean adventure, Aruba has amazing places to learn and practice (kite) surfing! Although more known for the calmer waters of Palm Beach, Eagle Beach and Mangel Halto, Aruba also has some special places to thrill your senses.

Because of strong winds and breezes, Aruba is perfect for wind and kite surfing. You will surely notice kites in the air as you drive around the wilder, rougher areas on Aruba's east side.

There are plenty of surf shop rentals to help you with your gear, and there are also a lot of tutors if you're looking to try for the first time and need a little help. These can be found around the island, and will surely come in hand if you're wanting to try a new

experience!

With that said, here are Aruba's favorite surf spots!

Andicuri

Andicuri is recognized as the best place for body boarding. Because of the rough waves, this beach is better suited for those with more experience in surfing. However, the beach with two bluffs – one on each side – is worth a visit, if only to watch the exciting show presented by



the surfers.

To go to Andicuri, you will need a 4x4 vehicle and drive from the ex-Natural Bridge Center. Alternatively, you can make it an adventure by going on a hike! The scenery is unique and beautiful on its own.

Reaching Andicuri Beach can be an adventure in itself, as it can be difficult to find and is only accessible by 4x4 vehicle or walking from the ex-Natural Bridge center, but the impressive scenery makes it all worthwhile!

Arashi

Arashi, a beach located close to the California Lighthouse, is a good spot for learning and having fun – if you're lucky! The waves at Arashi are usually calm, but with just the right weather, a swell forms attracting all the local surfers to the area.

Boca Grandi

Boca Grandi is at the most southern spot in Aruba, and is a popular spot with experienced surfers. Close to the famous Red Anchor and our beloved Sunrise City – San



Nicolas, a trip to Boca Grandi can easily turn into an all-day trip to this area of the island. With a beautiful beach (although it is not allowed to swim here, because of strong currents), you can enjoy a relaxing time combing the beach for driftwood, coral, and little crabs and snails.

Hadicurari

Known locally as Fisherman's Hut, here is where you will find most of the action for surfers in Aruba. With a variety of surf shops and schools in this area, you will find it easy to get in on the action.

Hadicurari is also the site of the Aruba Hi Winds World Challenge, which takes place usually in June/July, and it is the largest wind-surfing competition in the Caribbean!

Malmok

If you're a beginner, this is your spot. There are also various shops to rent gear and receive lessons, facilitating learning and just trying out a new experience. The beach is also popular for paddle-boarding and other water-sport activities. □

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Snakes you may encounter on Aruba



(Oranjestad)—If you have ever or will ever go off-roading on the island, you may encounter three types of snakes that are dominant on the island. The Cascabel, Santanero and Boa differ from each other in a couple ways, and local perspective on each one may help you understand what you need to do if you ever were to encounter one during your touring session on the island.

Cascabel (*Crotalus unicolor*)

The small Cascabel or Aruba Island Rattlesnake averages 70 cm in length. The body color is often uniform gray or light brown. There may be a faint pattern of diamond shaped markings on the back. This pattern is most noticeable on younger snakes. The most distinctive feature of this snake is the rattle at the end of its tail which makes a buzzing sound when the snake is alarmed. Cascabels are shy and not aggressive, but their venom can be dangerous to humans. In fact, it's the only venomous snake native to the island. It is best to leave this snake alone. Do not attempt to catch or kill it, as it

could not only be dangerous, but this snake is also endemic to the island, and its preservation has become a legal mandate for all residents and visitors.

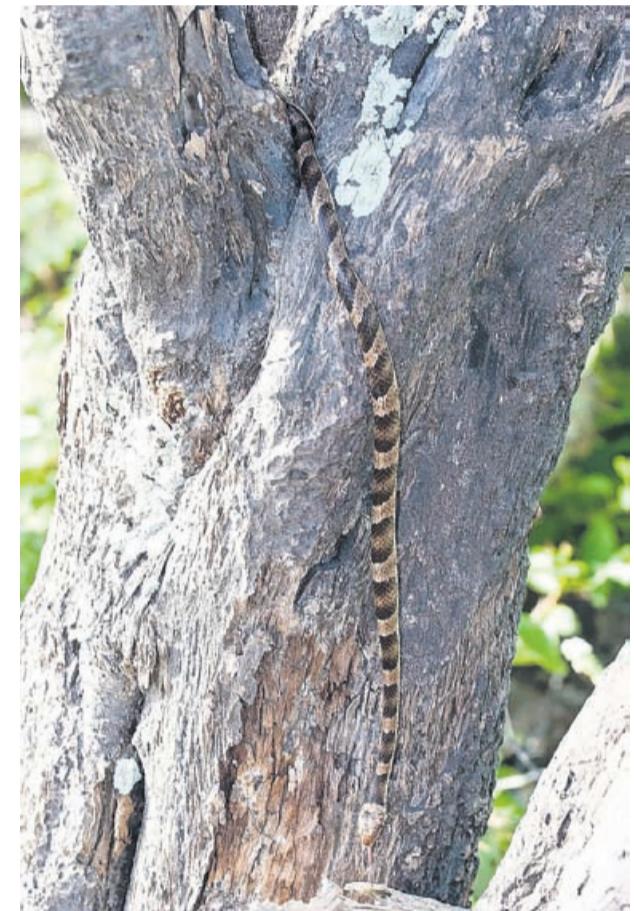
Cascabels hunt by waiting under bushes and fruiting trees to catch passing lizards, mice, rats, small rabbits, and an occasional bird. This is often considered to be one of the rarest rattlesnakes in the world. The range of the Cascabel is restricted to the rugged and mountainous areas of the island mostly within Arikok National Park. The Arikok National Park was designated in the early 1980s to include most of the rattlesnake's population, providing a safe refuge in which the snake can be protected and monitored. The government has also implemented outreach and education initiatives to change local perception of the snake and highlight its ecological and economic importance – it is now being promoted as a national symbol. Arikok's partnership with the Toledo zoo has safeguarded the rattlesnake ex-situ and led to a number of research projects collecting critical data on the Cascabel's abundance, life history and habitat requirement to help guide future conservation efforts.

Santanero

The slender Santanero or Aruban Cat-eyed Snake is a small fella, typically less than 50 cm long. This snake is recognizable by the large scales on the top of its head and by its pattern of dark brown bands alternating with light brown bands. The belly is plain white or cream colored without any markings. Native as well to the island, this snake is shy and not aggressive. However, it has enlarged teeth at the back of its mouth and mild venom which is not dangerous to humans, but can paralyze small lizards and frogs. Santaneros are most active at night when they search for food. During the day, they hide under rocks or leaves. They frequently climb trees and cactus. Santaneros eat toads, frogs, insects, and lizards. You may find Santaneros near dams during periods of rainy weather or crossing roads at night. This snake is found island wide. A Santanero in your garden will keep away the unwanted insects. If you encounter a Santanero around your garden, please do not harm this species.

Boa (Boa constrictor)

Boas are Aruba's largest snakes. The longest



Boa found on the island was slightly less than 3 m. Newborn Boas average 35 cm. Boas are not venomous but are what is called constrictor snakes; they kill by wrapping themselves around a prey and suffocating them. The most distinctive feature of a Boa is its pattern of dark brown and tan blotches which become red toward the tail. The belly is white or cream colored with numerous black spots. Boas are excellent climbers and may be found in trees and cactus. Boas also hide in the leaves under bushes waiting to catch prey that pass. Boas catch their prey with their teeth and then constrict it in their coils. The Boa's diet consists of birds, lizards, rats, mice, and rabbits. Large Boas have been known to eat small goats and chickens. When threatened, Boas will hiss loudly.

Boas are a non-native species and are invasive to the island, risking the population of native lizards and birds. The first Boas were reported on the island in 1999. Since that time they have been found across the entire island in all types of habitats. If you ever encounter a Boa, please do not approach it. Instead, please call the Arikok National Park, as they are experienced in handling Boas. □





CRAVING THE BEST BURGER ON THE ISLAND?

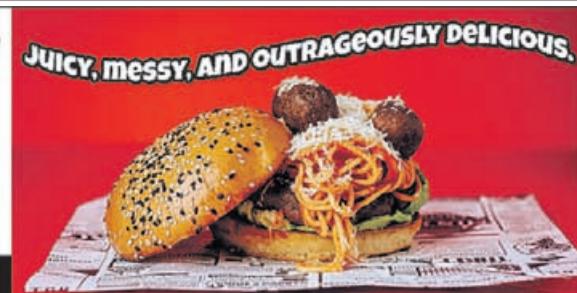
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Dining in? Try making a local favorite

How to make "funchi hasa"



(Oranjestad)—A night in can be just as fun as a night out on the town, especially if you got the right snacks to munch on. One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is "funchi hasa" (fried polenta sticks). A super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here's how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

So what is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups,

stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick and filling snack.

Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour*
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it's cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.

When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping



sauce.

Note: We recommend the FUNCHI FRESKU polenta flour brand that is sold in all supermarkets on the island. You can also use yellow corn flour from the brand PAN.

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Picuda!

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Picuda", a very common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here's some information about the beloved Picuda.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? This is an informative article that illustrate some fish and their names in Papiamento, which the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, known as "Santa Rosa",



wants to share and also obtain information from the public.

Picuda, Sphyraena barracuda, Greater Barracuda

Well known is the Picuda on the island—Barracuda in English. Its scientific name is Sphyraena barracuda. It is a widely caught fish. It is found throughout the year in our waters, where it is a so-called "ambush preda-

tor" that stays still or floats in the water waiting for its prey to approach so it can attack it with lightning speed. It is well known for fishermen, especially for its white flesh in fish soup. In fishing culture, there are many other names, such as Pecho blanco, Blekito, Banana, or Bleki. The names vary according to size.

Description

The Picuda is a long fish, with a round body like a torpedo and silver in color with shiny black stripes. Below, that is, the belly, is whiter, while the top part is darker. Its snout is very pointed, and the lower jaw is longer than the upper one. Its peduncle, where the body meets the tail, is thick, while the tail also forms a crescent but in this case one more "full" than that of mullet or conefish. This reflects the hunting style of the Picuda. It needs to be able to accelerate quickly when the prey gets close.

In Aruba:

Picuda can be found in our waters around our island throughout the year. Picuda, in our waters, is edible without any problem. Picuda is also a highly sought-after fish by sports fishermen or recreational fishermen because it puts up a good fight once hooked. It can be caught via trolling from a boat, casting from shore with a line or rod, or by jigging, casting the lure (artificial bait) and moving it with certain rod motions.

Picture courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

Aruba to me

ORANJESTAD — You are back or still enjoying your vacation?... we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

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Aruba's neighborhoods; the meaning behind their names

Just like any other country, Aruba has unique and beautifully named neighborhoods that all form a part of its culture and development. Many of these names have a historical background and meaning that teaches us about the island and its rich culture every day.

With this series, we want to take you on a journey of discovery, where you'll learn not only the beautiful names but the history behind it that gives it life and meaning.

Anabui/Tierra Del Sol

This neighborhood can be seen on Van Raders map and Werbeta as Anna Boei. Anna Boei is a name of which there isn't much information about its origin.

The best historians were able to deduce is that this name came to be because of a miscommunication between Van Spengler and the natives who were living on the island. In the Arawak/Taino language one can find the word Anaiboa, which consists of Ana meaning flower or the best and Iboa; the juice of a



cassava, which together would mean "the best juice of a cassava".

If one assumes that the actual word heard was Anaboio instead, consisting of Ana meaning the best and Boio (bohio); house, the iteration of Anabui would mean "the best house." This is the origin that has been more or less speculated and assumed for the word Anabui and its meaning.

During the second world war and later, this area was used as a terrain for training of shooting by militia and later on Korps Mariniers (the marines of Aruba). By the end of the previous century a large part of Anabui was developed to have luxurious villas and a golf course, which lead to it getting the name Tierra Del Sol, Spanish for Land of the Sun. The name is not an official name, but the name of the devel-

opment project that took place. It is hoped that the original and 'old' name of Anabui is never lost and now it will be remembered by both locals and tourists.

Angochi

This name can be seen on the Werbeta map with little and cursive letters. It is the unofficial name for the area given by a tenant to the land that was rented to him.

The biggest probability that historians believe is that it comes from native descent, during the time in the 19th century where Mestizos still lived on Aruba. The name can't really be explained and according to books on its history seems to be more of a sign of corruption.

However, it seems to come from combining A(n), which is a generalizing prefix and Goeiza, which means 'the spirit of a living man'. Angochi remains more of a guess.

This neighborhood's abbreviation is: An.□



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS		36 Wip
1 Mass unit		awa
5 NYC cultural attraction		38 Pap
9 Dance party attendee		unit
11 Lock setting		39 Bu
12 "Skyfall" singer		tune
13 Houston player		40 Bas
14 Polite address		mean
15 Fire		41 Han
17 Quarter-backs, at times		lam
19 Homer's bartending pal		DOWN
20 Inclines		1 Und
21 Kingsley or Affleck		star
22 Canyon of comics		2 Tire
24 Sit-up targets		3 Relu
26 Comfy spots		4 Sing
29 Hotel amenity		Tillis
30 City north of Newark		5 Chu
32 Whole heaps		ever
34 Sea, to Simone		6 Pun
35 Massage targets		7 Stra
		8 With
		aid
	1	2
	9	
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	14	
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	32	
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	38	
	40	

A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-5

CRYPTOQUOTE

C BGIJ UWPPGIJV KJLWYPJ TGV
QJ CN CP W LVZ WHWCXPN
CXRCTTIVIXLJ W LVZ TGV

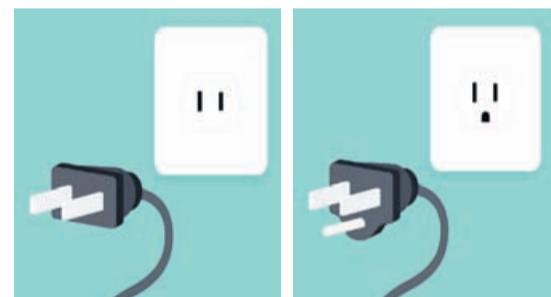
LGQUWPPCGX. — JBCJ ECJPJB
Cryptoquote: WHAT YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, MY FRIEND, IS THE RESULT OF A LIFETIME OF CHOCOLATE. — KATHARINE HEPBURN

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			ARR	DEPT	BERTH
TUE	01	CELEBRITY REFLECTION CARNIVAL HORIZON NORWEGIAN VIVA LOGOS HOPE	08.00 09.00 11.00 *****	23.00 23.00 21.00 *****	B C I E
WED	02	ROTTERDAM LOGOS HOPE	08.00 *****	17.00 *****	C E
THU	03	AIDABELLA NORWEGIAN JEWEL LOGOS HOPE	08.00 10.30 *****	18.00 20.30 *****	B C E
FRI	04	NORWEGIAN PEARL LOGOS HOPE	10.00 *****	22.00 *****	C E
SAT	05	EXPLORER OF THE SEAS LOGOS HOPE	16.30 *****	***** *****	C E
SUN	06	RESILIENT LADY EXPLORER OF THE SEAS - dept. OCEANIA SIRENA LOGOS HOPE	08.00 ***** 11.00 *****	23.59 23.00 21.00 *****	B C I E

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Safety

Safety
Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



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Editors

Pilar Flores
Richard Brooks
Angenette Figuereo

Sales

Mark Gomes
Sulaika Croes

Classifieds

classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection

accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website

Juan Luis Pinto

Weststraat 22

T: 582-7800

E: news@arubatoday.com

W: www.arubatoday.com

f @arubatoday

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Tom Hardy and Guy Ritchie reunite for gritty crime series 'MobLand'

By GARY GERARD HAMILTON
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Tom Hardy has collected troves of knowledge and skill throughout his journey as an actor, forming a megastar career. But any education he received from director Guy Ritchie during their time on the 2008 "RocknRolla" film was gained from afar.

"I didn't have very much to do with him ... the first time I worked with him. Gerard (Butler) was leading that film and in many elements,

we were support staff," said Hardy. "So, I got to experience being on the Guy Ritchie set, and it was a bit from a position of not being a lead, and that's a different responsibility."

But time can bring people and experiences back around, especially in Hollywood. Since that film 17 years ago, Ritchie has transitioned into esteemed directorial status. And Hardy has morphed into a box office superstar with films like "The Dark Night" as the imposing villain Bane, and the titular role for Marvel's "Venom" franchise. Now, the two have reunited for Ritchie's gritty, yet sophisticated series "MobLand."

"I was really keen to go back and work with him because he's a fellow Brit and he's done quite incredible work," explained Hardy. "I wanted to go and play with him, actually, and see what that was like now I'm older, and it was good fun."

The Paramount+ original series follows Harry Da Souza (Hardy), an intimidating, yet calm fixer for a London-based crime family hoping to find the missing son of a rival faction to prevent a catastrophic gang war. How did Hardy prepare to play such a menacing, yet even-keeled character?



Helen Mirren, from left, director Guy Ritchie, Pierce Brosnan and Tom Hardy pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of 'MobLand' on Thursday, March 27, 2025, in London.

Associated Press

"No acting required" he said with a big laugh. "Just turn up and, 'Oh, yeah, that makes sense' and say the lines. Don't bump into the furniture."

The second episode of the 10-part "MobLand" series airs Sunday on Paramount+. The series was created by Ronan Bennett, known for popular crime shows like "The Day of the Jackal" and "Top Boy," and written with playwright Jez Butterworth. Ritchie serves as executive producer and directed the first two episodes. The "MobLand" idea began as a spin-off from Showtime's popular "Ray Donovan" series, before becoming a stand-alone show.

Two-time Oscar-winner Helen Mirren stars as the devious

Maeve, matriarch and manipulator of the crime family, while Pierce Brosnan plays her husband and mob leader, marking a reunion for the pair who worked on the 1980 film "The Long Good Friday." It may be hard to think of a role that Dame Mirren hasn't played, but she found one with "MobLand."

"There are always characters out there that are going to take you by surprise and ... I think, 'Oh my god, I've never done anything like that before,'" said the "1923" star who believes the line between shooting film and TV is now nearly nonexistent. "That's one of the sort of beauties of my job, actually, is to constantly be entering into such very, very different worlds."

Mirren said the opportunity to work with Hardy was intriguing.

"Tom's involvement in it was one of the reasons I signed up because I've admired his work over many years," Mirren said. "Different actors, you can see, 'Oh, they're a great actor' ... they can perform. But certain actors like Tom, it's an interior power that just communicates with the camera. And Tom's got that. You know what? It's called star power."

The "MobLand" cast features Paddy Considine of "House of the Dragon" fame, Joanne Froggatt, Lara Pulver, Anson Boon and Mandeep Dhillon. While this show technically reunites Mirren and Brosnan, they also shot the upcoming "The Thursday Murder Club" film prior to this project.

While much was unknown when Brosnan signed on, "MobLand" had all the right ingredients for the former James Bond to dive in, starting with Ritchie, who released his Netflix series "The Gentlemen" last year.

"He's naughty. He's cheeky. He's bold," said Brosnan. "I love his work. His movies. The way he's acquitted himself on the landscape of cinema. He's a unique talent all his own ... so I said yes. I wanted to go back to London. I wanted to work." □



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British police charge comedian Russell Brand with rape and sexual assault



Actor Russell Brand is seen during the Republican National Convention Thursday, July 18, 2014, in Milwaukee.

Associated Press

indecent assault, one of oral rape and two of sexual assault. Brand denied engaging in "non-consensual" sexual activity.

The alleged offenses involve four women and took place between 1999 and 2005 — one in the English seaside town of Bournemouth and the other three in the Westminster area of central London. Police said the investigation remains open and urged anyone with relevant information to contact the force. In September 2023, British media outlets Channel 4 and the Sunday Times published claims by four women of being sexually assaulted or raped by Brand. The accusers have not been identified. The comedian, author and

"Get Him To The Greek" actor has been interviewed by police about the allegations, which he denies.

In a video posted Friday on X, Brand said "I've never engaged in non-consensual activity. I pray that you can see that by looking in my eyes." He added that "I am now going to have the opportunity to defend these charges in court and I'm incredibly grateful for that." Known for his unbridled and risqué standup routines, Brand hosted shows on radio and television, wrote memoirs charting his battles with drugs and alcohol, appeared in several Hollywood movies and was briefly married to pop star Katy Perry between 2010 and 2012. □

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British police on Friday charged Russell Brand with rape and sexual assault following an 18-month investigation

sparked when four women alleged they had been assaulted by the controversial comedian.

London's Metropolitan Police force said Brand, 50, faces one count of rape, one of

WNBA star Elena Delle Donne retires after 11 seasons and the 2019 championship

By DOUG FEINBERG

AP Basketball Writer

Elena Delle Donne is officially retiring from professional basketball after not playing last year and dealing with injuries and illnesses throughout her entire career.

When healthy, she was a force on the court, winning two WNBA MVPs, making seven All-Star appearances in 11 seasons and helping the Washington Mystics win a league championship in 2019.

Delle Donne, 35, made the announcement on social media Friday and referenced a line from one of her favorite childhood books that reads, "How did it get so late so soon?"

"I have asked myself that over and over again in the process of coming to the decision to retire from playing basketball," Delle Donne wrote on Instagram. "Being able to say that out loud was one of the hardest parts of my career. My body seemed to make this decision before my mind accepted it, but I now truly know this is the right thing for me at the right time." The Mystics soon after her announcement said that Delle Donne would be a special advisor to the Monumental Sports group that owns the Mystics and Wizards.

"Elena Delle Donne has been

a transformative force for the Washington Mystics and women's basketball," Monumental Sports & Entertainment Chairman and CEO Ted Leonsis said. "A champion and MVP on and off the court, her legacy as a player, leader, and ambassador will leave a permanent mark on the game, and on generations of young women, for years to come."

The second overall pick in 2013 by Chicago, Delle Donne spent a dozen years as one of the faces of the WNBA. She played the last six seasons in Washington, helping the Mystics win the franchise's first championship in 2019.

"She put us over the top," former Mystics coach Mike Thibault told The Associated Press. "We were trying to build to where we could have a team that somebody like her would want to play with and we could win the championship that she was seeking and that we were seeking." Delle Donne was instrumental in the title run despite playing with three herniated discs in her back. That season she had the only 50-40-90 season in league history when she shot 51.5% from the field, 43% from behind the 3-point line and 97.4% from the foul line. "She had one of the purest shooting forms ever," Thibault

said. "We had NBA guys with the Wizards who didn't want to be in shooting drills with her."

Thibault recounted the many hours Delle Donne spent in the gym trying to maintain her body while dealing with an assortment of injuries and illness like Lyme disease.

"After her back surgeries, she had a lot of days in the arena that started at 6 a.m. and when other players were done she was still doing another treatment or massage or whatever it would take to be able to play," Thibault said.

She opted out of the 2020 season that was played in Florida because of the coronavirus pandemic because of health concerns and then turned down a contract from the team in February 2024 to step away from basketball. Delle Donne, who also won an Olympic gold medal with USA Basketball in 2016, averaged 19.5 points and 6.7 rebounds in 241 regular-season games, although she was never able to play a full season.

She also played in 40 playoffs games, where she averaged 17.9 points, 6.1 boards and 2.3 assists.

Delle Donne came onto the scene in high school as one of the most sought after recruits in the country. She orig-



Washington Mystics' Elena Delle Donne smiles after scoring during a WNBA basketball game against the Chicago Sky Thursday, June 22, 2023, in Chicago.

Associated Press

inally committed to UConn before deciding at the last minute to come home to Delaware to be closer to her sister. After she stepped away from basketball to play volleyball her first year at the school, she missed the sport too much and came back to play hoops.

She helped Delaware reach unprecedented heights in her time there and finished with more than 3,000 points in her career.

"Words cannot adequately express how thankful I am to my family, all of my incredible teammates, friends, executives, sponsors, staff and most importantly the amazing fans that have accompanied me on this journey," she wrote. "This game has been my life, and I am grateful for the memories and how much it's given me. It feels good to close this chapter knowing I gave it my all, and I can't wait for what's next!" □

Phillies' Harper says 'only losers complain' about how much World Series champion Dodgers spend

By DAN GELSTON

AP Sports Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Phillies slugger Bryce Harper loves LA — well, at least the World Series champion Dodgers' freewheeling spending on their way to a nearly \$320 million payroll.

A two-time NL MVP, Harper was blunt Friday ahead of a three-game series with the champs about those in baseball who whine about the Dodgers payroll and signing of Japanese stars.

"I don't know if people will like this," Harper said, "but I feel like only losers complain about what they're doing. I think they're a great team



Philadelphia Phillies' Bryce Harper gestures after he singled during the fifth inning of a baseball game against the Washington Nationals, Saturday, March 29, 2025, in Washington.

Associated Press

and a great organization." Major League Baseball's average salary broke the \$5 million barrier on opening day

for the first time, according to a study by The Associated Press.

The New York Mets, with Juan

Soto's record \$61.9 million pay, led MLB for the third straight opening day with a \$322.6 million payroll, just ahead of Dodgers at \$319.5 million. Adding Blake Snell, Michael Conforto, Tanner Scott and Kirby Yates, the Dodgers boosted payroll by a big league-high \$69 million from opening day last year. Los Angeles' payroll figure was held down by deferred payments. Shohei Ohtani's \$70 million salary was discounted to a present-day value of \$28.2 million because it won't be paid in full until 2035, causing him to be listed as the 18th-highest-paid player. Other Dodgers

with deferred payments include Mookie Betts, Tommy Edman, Freddie Freeman, Teoscar Hernández, Scott, Will Smith and Snell.

Harper is in the seventh season of a \$330 million, 13-year contract, at the time the largest deal in baseball history. The Phillies have also been big spenders in recent seasons under owner John Middleton and reached the playoffs three straight seasons. Phillies pitcher Zack Wheeler will earn \$42 million as the second-highest paid player in the game. The Phillies opened with a \$283.3 million payroll, third-highest in baseball. □

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Cardinals' Trey McBride relishes status as NFL's highest-paid tight end after long journey

By DAVID BRANDT

AP Sports Writer

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) — It was just two years ago that Cardinals tight end Trey McBride had his first meeting with the team's new coaching staff, including offensive coordinator Drew Petzing.

The coach's message to the second-year player was honest — we like you, but we're not sure how big of a role you'll have.

McBride didn't take long to answer that question.

The 6-foot-4, 246-pounder's quick rise into one of the NFL's premier offensive players continued this week when the 25-year-old signed a \$76 million, four-year deal that will keep him with the franchise through the 2029 season and makes him the league's highest-paid tight end. It's all a little hard to fathom for a guy from Fort Morgan, Colorado, a small town about 80 miles northeast of Denver with a pop-



Arizona Cardinals tight end Trey McBride (85) during their NFL football game against the San Francisco 49ers Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025, in Glendale, Ariz.

Associated Press

ulation of about 11,000. He played college ball in relative obscurity at Colorado State, and the Cardinals took some criticism from pundits who thought it was a reach to take McBride in the second round of the 2022 NFL draft. These days, it's looking more like a steal.

"It's been a journey, there's no doubt about it," McBride said. "I'm the first tight end taken and I hardly play my

first year, got 29 catches. It was just a rocky rookie year, didn't play as much as I wanted to. But I kept my head down, kept grinding and working hard.

"I just put the work in every day, I put the work in overtime and to finally reap the rewards is exciting."

McBride choked up as he spoke those words, fighting back tears as he reflected on his unorthodox path to

NFL stardom.

"It's crazy and overwhelming," McBride said. "A lot of hard work has gone into this. Just excited more than anything — happy tears for sure." McBride's quiet rookie season in 2022 came during the final year of Kliff Kingsbury's tenure. The tight end was inactive for the first game of his career and finished the season with just 29 catches for 265 yards. Kingsbury was fired after the Cardinals finished 4-13.

Given a fresh start with a new coaching staff, the tight end's production exploded under coach Jonathan Gannon and Petzing. He was a first-time Pro Bowl selection in 2024 after catching 111 passes for 1,146 yards and two touchdowns. That followed his breakout 2023 season, when he had 81 catches for 825 yards and three touchdowns.

It's no coincidence that McBride's performance picked

up steam following the return of quarterback Kyler Murray, who came back from an ACL injury midway through the 2023 season. The two have established a close bond over the past 1 1/2 seasons and quickly connected after McBride's new contract was announced.

"Kyler was one of the first guys I talked to — he FaceTimed me — we were able to talk and just rejoice about how excited we are to play with each other a few more years," McBride said. "To grow, to win and do all the things we want to do together."

The Cardinals have missed the playoffs during McBride's first three seasons, though they were in the postseason hunt last year before finishing 8-9. General manager Monti Ossenfort has been busy over the past few months, adding defensive standouts Josh Sweat, Dalvin Tomlinson and Calais Campbell. □